

## **2. Педагогічна та вікова психологія**

### **PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC ASPECTS OF WORK WITH FAMILIES**

**Volodarska N.D.**

*Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Leading Researcher in the Laboratory of Personality*

*Psychology named after P.R. Chamata,*

*G. Kostiuk Institute of Psychology NAPS of Ukraine,*

*Kiev, Ukraine*

The purpose of the article is to develop methods of work with married couples, which is dictated by changes in the consciousness and mind of the modern society. New public organizations have emerged in Ukraine, joining representatives of sexual minorities and their parents. For example, the public organization "Parental Initiative "Tergo" which supports parents of lesbian couples, homosexuals, bisexuals, transgenders. The goal of psychological support to parents is to build trusting relationships with children, awareness and acceptance of peculiarities of the LGBT community.

In most cases, the cause of problems is provoked by institutionalized homophobia, which is characteristic of our society. The most important task arises of training counselors and psychotherapists, with account of “cross-cultural filters” specified by Professor D. Davis [1, p.105].

Conditions of modern society, which is actually homophobic and heterosexual, dictate peculiarities of psychotherapeutic work with homosexuals and especially homosexual couples. Similarly, the problematic of psychotherapeutic work will proceed from inner homophobia and non-acceptance of oneself and one's own identity. Work with such couples will often be aimed at consciousness and final assumption of one's homosexuality or homosexuality of any of partners.

From the experience of working with the homosexual couple, wherein one man is 43 years old, the other is 40 years old. They sought advice because of strong quarrels caused by jealousy of one of the partners. One of them was jealous of the

other in public places and in a narrow circle of friends, when the other began to behave like an active heterosexual man. And since one of them has not fully recognized his own homosexual orientation, this caused a strong tension in the couple. Work with such couple was aimed at valuing each other, recognizing oneself in this relationship and a strong fear of being as he is. A lot of time had to be given to the feeling of shame, because at the conscious level each partner recognized himself as a homosexual, but unconsciously the paternal figure was ashaming both of them.

Since there are a lot of feelings and emotions in such couple, the protective psychological mechanisms are primary, for example, projective identification. Thus, a forty-year-old client was supplanting and projecting his own shame so much that a forty-three-year-old man ashamed of himself and their couple.

During the session, it was often possible to observe how the split-off and unconscious parts of one's own I (according to Yalom [3]) were expressed in fear and disgust towards oneself in the form of jokes on the homosexual theme; this also manifested in such phrases that he accepted his own strangeness, but when he noticed someone else's strangeness (homosexuality), then he doesn't accept.

Since one of the most actual problems of psychotherapy of homosexual couples consists in building trust relationships between parents and children, we use methods of the art therapy. The joint drawing "My territory" allows us to consider their attitude to personal boundaries of each other. In the drawing process it is analyzed the choice of strategies of communication and interaction, as well as the context of relationships. The discussion of what was drawn reveals the possibilities for changing these strategies. The client (mother of the son with a homosexual orientation), expressing fears about his future, cried, condemned his friend, showed aggression in her statements ("I will kill him, he broke the life of my son and my life").

Analyzing the drawing, it was difficult to identify the boundaries of the client and her son (they were absent). Gradually, they were drawn by both the son and mother, denoting the possibility of their trespassing (to visit each other). The rules

were defined for visiting a foreign territory; the requirements for compliance with these rules (forms of punishment, liability for confidentiality) were specified.

The therapy strategy was aimed at realizing the rights to own personal space, responsibility for compliance with the accepted agreements.

Correction of behavioral stereotypes in relationships is possible, subject to the awareness and acceptance by an individual of possibilities and limitations in own manifestations, ability to defend personal boundaries. The gestalt therapy activates life events experience to help designing a reality.

An individual masters the new life experience in the framework of psychotherapy (client – therapist) and transfers it to real life relationships with others. The transfer of this experience to real relationships activates the search for more productive strategies (compromises, alternatives in behavior and communication) in achieving the goals set. Awareness of own dissimilarity, opposition in certain life circumstances helps an individual to set new goals. The feeling of uncertainty in decision-making brings activity into the individual's analysis of own and of others feelings, experiences, and possibilities for changing a life history.

Selection of problems in a dialogue with a client can change context of the dialogue. The client (mother of the son with a homosexual orientation), talking about her feelings about his future, was amazed at changes in her understanding of what was happening in her family. While she was telling the story, her attitude changed to the problem of her son's adaptation at the new job ("Maybe I'm in vain so worried?" "He so happily accepted the new requirements at work"). As John Bowlby notes, "many of those difficulties that parents face arise from their inability to regulate their own ambivalence" [2, p. 31]. It can be feelings of love and hostility. Their occurrence may be related with the parents' non-acceptance of their motives, which they experienced in adolescence. Awareness of these difficulties by parents helps to correct the ambivalence of their feelings in their relationships with their children.

Complications in working with homosexual couples consist primarily in that the psychotherapist recognizes his own homosexual part. Otherwise, in the counter transference there will necessarily be shame or, even worse, the therapist

unconsciously, by the principle of projective identification, will attack this part in the client couple.

Returning to the external homophobia (social), it is important to emphasize that such couples are not recognized either by society or by the church. Legally, such couples cannot be registered. It is also impossible for such couples to adopt a child. That is, it is clear that support from the external environment is practically unavailable, which affects the assignment of value and significance of relationships in a couple.

The mechanisms of overcoming internal and external homophobia of such couples in society are as follows:

1. Imitation of heterosexuality, resulting in a feeling of shame and betrayal of oneself, sense of existential guilt towards oneself, feeling of total loneliness.
2. Direct or indirect confrontation with society is a direct and strongly expressed demonstration of strangeness (underlined demonstration). The consequence of such behavior is a constant feeling of rejection throughout life.
3. Life in a very narrow circle of homosexuals. After all, an ordinary human life is not limited only to intimate relationships; thereby a homosexual couple deprives itself of all the colors of life.
4. The experience of own relationship is always unique for everyone, just because any narcissistic expansion has a problem: it is a narcissistic swing from grandiosity to nothingness, from euphoria to depression.

It is possible to list requests which homosexual couples submit more often: feelings of shame about their own strangeness and otherness of relations; internal homophobia and contempt for such relations, their depreciation; an example is when one of the partners has a heterosexual couple (family) in addition to the homosexual couple; fear of assessing the external environment; trauma of open confession in society; search problems of roles in the couple itself, since there are no unambiguous stereotypes for a same-sex couple; problems of birth and adoption of children. Also problems with the education of children in same-sex couples.

## Conclusions

Summarizing the problems of psychological support for homosexual couples, we can distinguish frequently encountered:

- clients' experiences of social restrictions in the legalization of their rights;
- recognition of their relationship in a couple: towards their parents, relatives, neighbors, classmates, colleagues and others;
- understanding of reasons for restrictions in the open manifestation of relationships in a homosexual couple (condemnation, hostility, punishment, indifference and lack of understanding of their problems);
- analysis of emerging problems in a couple, determination of the complexity and adequacy of solutions to these problems
- antagonisms with a heterosexual system of assessments of others (manifestations of heterosexism and homophobia).

The psychotherapy for any family couple is aimed at formation of a balance between recognition of the own value and strangeness, one relations and external (social) safety. Awareness and understanding of the role of external situational factors of own behavior occurs, the level of emotional tension and anxiety decreases, self-assessment rises, as well as willingness to self-analysis of the causes of own intrapersonal conflicts, tolerance in conflict situations with other people, search for a compromise in the relationship with them. This applies not only to families with peculiarities of sexual orientation and addictions, but also to any other families.

## References

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